

# STARR FAMILY HOME

— STATE HISTORIC SITE —

*Marshall, Texas*

## Pre-Visit Guide

## Grade 7

### Overview: Maplecroft, Home to the Starrs

The Starr family, Frank and Clara and their ten children, were a prominent family in East Texas and the builders of the historic home they named Maplecroft. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Starrs played an important role in land and railroad development in the area.

### Social Studies TEKS

(5) History. The student understands how events and issues shaped the history of Texas during the Civil War and Reconstruction. The student is expected to:

(B) analyze the political, economic, and social effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction in Texas

(6) History. The student understands how individuals, events, and issues shaped the history of Texas from Reconstruction through the beginning of the 20th century. The student is expected to:

(C) identify significant individuals, events, and issues from Reconstruction through the beginning of the 20th century, including the effects of the growth of railroads and the contributions of James Hogg

(12) Economics. The student understands patterns of work and economic activities in Texas. The student is expected to:

(A) explain how people in different regions of Texas earn their living, past and present, through a subsistence economy and providing goods and services;

(E) explain how developments in transportation and communication have influenced economic activities in Texas

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology.

The student is expected to:

(A) differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas;

(B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;

(D) identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants

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## Materials

- Historical images for display/distribution
- Graphic organizers

## Vocabulary

- **parlor:** a formal room in a house where visitors were entertained.
- **Transcription:** a printed or typed copy of words that have been spoken or handwritten

## Historical Context

Frank and Clara Starr married in New Orleans in 1868. Frank, along with his father James Harper Starr and brother Amory, worked together as land and banking agents for real estate interests across the state. In the late 1860s, Frank Starr debated whether to move from their home in Nacogdoches to Galveston or to Marshall. He seemed to prefer the society in Galveston, but decided that the East Texas town of Marshall would prove a better location for their business headquarters and would also provide easier access to Clara's family in New Orleans via Shreveport's river steamboats.

Marshall had other practical appeals. By 1854, Marshall had a telegraph link to New Orleans, which gave it quick access to national news and made it the first town in Texas to have a telegraph. By 1860, Marshall was one of the largest and wealthiest towns in East Texas. The town donated land and \$300,000 of bond money (over \$5 million in today's money) to convince the Texas & Pacific Railway Company to base its operations in town. In the 1870s, the Texas & Pacific Railroad (T&PRR) located in Marshall and the town became a primary stop for rails that would eventually stretch across Texas, connecting Marshall to cities, people, and industries in the east, north, and west. In choosing Marshall over Galveston, Frank also avoided the potential devastation that his family might have experienced in the Great Galveston Hurricane of 1900, which destroyed over 3,600 buildings and was the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history.

By 1872, the family had settled in Marshall and were living in their newly built home, Maplecroft. Frank and Clara had ten children, but only six daughters survived into adulthood. Frank, along with his father James Harper Starr and brother Amory, worked together as land and banking agents for real estate interests across the state. Clara managed a house that included their children, numerous servants, her widowed mother Mrs. Clapp, and a live-in teacher for their daughters. The Starrs became a prominent family in Marshall and were known for their work in Texas land and railroad development after the Civil War.

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## Activity: At Home with the Starrs

*15 minutes*

Display/distribute the **resource images** of the Starr home and family members.

Ask the following questions for discussion as students analyze the photos:

- What details in the photos tell you about the Starr's social standing? Give examples.
- What activities might have taken place in the parlor?
- What similarities and differences do you see between the Starr's parlor and bedrooms and rooms in today's houses?
- Why are historical photographs valuable?

## Primary Source Activity: Handwritten History

*30 minutes*

Display/distribute the **five letters from James F. Starr** and the **main idea organizer**.

Tell students that these are the transcribed text from James Starr's handwritten letters. Preview the letters, including the dates and any identified audiences. Review the historical context of the Starr's decision to make their home in Marshall, Tx, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Have students work individually or in pairs to read each letter and summarize the main idea. What purpose did James F. Starr have in writing each letter? After completion, discuss the students' findings. Extend the discussion by brainstorming why historical letters are important to the interpretation and preservation of history.

### Letter summaries:

- Letter 1, January 21, 1869 – Frank comments on their Galveston vs. Marshall decision.
- Letter 2, March 17, 1870 – Frank mentions that Yankee soldiers would be leaving Nacogdoches for northwest Texas. At this time while the south was under Reconstruction, the U.S. military closely supervised local government and elections, and they tried to protect Republican office holders and freedmen from violence.
- Letter 3, May 15, 1870 – Frank, his father, and brother Amory intended to work in land development. The C.B. and Co. mentioned is Clapp Brothers and Co., a business run by Clara's family in New Orleans. Discuss land as a resource in Texas.
- Letter 4, July 19, 1870 – Frank confirms his father's purchase of Block 51 in Marshall, where Frank and Clara would build their home, Maplecroft.

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- Letter 5, June 26, 1872 – Marshall donated land and \$300,000 worth of bonds to convince the Texas & Pacific Railway Company (T.P.R.R.) to base its operations in town. Today, considering inflation, that amount of money would be over \$5 million.

## ELA Extension: Imagining Alternate History

### ELA TEKS

(15) Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Students are expected to:

(A) write an imaginative story that:

- (i) sustains reader interest;
- (ii) includes well-paced action and an engaging story line;
- (iii) creates a specific, believable setting through the use of sensory details;
- (iv) develops interesting characters

Alternate history is a subgenre of fiction in which one or more historical events occur differently than what happened in reality.

Review the Starrs' decision to move to Marshall rather than Galveston, Texas in 1870. Then ask students to imagine that the reverse decision had been made. Instead of moving to Marshall and building Maplecroft, the Starrs moved their family to Galveston that year.

Have students research what life was like in late 1800s Galveston and write a first-person letter as one of the members of the Starr family describing their life in coastal Texas to a friend.

### Assessment

Evaluate student media organizers and map for completeness and understanding.

### Take-home Extension

Distribute **Starr Family KWL charts**. Tell students to complete the K and W columns of the chart and bring it back to class. They will complete the chart as a Post-Visit activity.

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## Additional Resources & Extensions

### **The Portal to Texas History**

<https://texashistory.unt.edu>

### **The Handbook of Texas Online**

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook>

### **Library of Congress**

<https://loc.gov>

### **East Texas Research Center—East Texas Digital Archives**

<http://digital.sfasu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/EastTexRC>

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## Activity Image 1: Starr Family



Clara Clapp Starr and child



James Frank Starr



Starr daughters

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## Activity Image 2: Maplecroft parlor



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## Activity Image 3: Maplecroft bedroom



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## Activity Image 4: Maplecroft



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## Primary Source Image 1: James F. Starr letter, January 21, 1869

For a long time We have been talking about going to Galveston some time in the future, - Pa generally assents - but cannot say when. I believe that we could go in three months at the farthest,- and am sure it would be a great advantage to all of us.- We have sometimes spoken of going to Marshall,- but I dont like the locality near so much as Galveston. - It is true that Marshall would be nearer the centre of the section of Country over which our most important business interests are scattered, - but that is not so very important, - our business is almost entirely carried on by correspondence and subagents, and the difference in time as to communicating by mail is very little in favor of Marshall. - Wherever we may go I am anxious for Pa & Ma to Board and not keep House.- I am satisfied that it would be much the best for them. Long ago Pa said to me that he was determined to leave Nacogdoches for a better place, as soon as I returned from the University of V<sup>a</sup>. - now when it seems to me practicable, I am eager for him to fulfill his promise.

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## Primary Source Image 2: James F. Starr letter, March 17, 1870

My dear Mother,

Your letters to Pa and Clara which came by last mail gave us all much pleasure. Pa had a touch of his dumb chills - but I think has got all right again. - Amory is up and doing very well. Our little Clara has not yet taken the measles, but and I hope will not. - though it is I fear probable that she will. - We have kept her out of Amory's room. - All the Yankee Soldiers leave here next Monday for the north-west frontier of Texas - at which we all rejoice. I went down to see Mrs Engledow to day. - she has been quite sick. - but is now better. Mrs Dr Johnson (of Melrose) is now living with her and will live with her all summer - which is a good arrangement for both of them.

There will be a circus here Saturday - which is more of a treat to us than the theatre, opera etc, can be to those persons who live in such a nice place as New Orleans. - Clara received the photographs of Emmie & Mary - we were much pleased with them. -

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## Primary Source Image 3: James F. Starr letter, May 15, 1870

I have strong hopes that something will be done now by railroads. - Every mile of road that is built in Eastern Texas has great influence for our interests. -

My endeavor now is to make our land business simply an "Agency for sale of Texas Lands" - by which I mean that I only want to have lands for sale, and not lands which require lawyers work - straightening confused and imperfect titles, &c. - this has been a branch of our business which has given us great labor and small pay. - and I hope that in a few years progress of railroads & increase of population will have made Texas Real Estate so much more valuable, that we can afford to drop the land Agency entirely - and find our time occupied in attending to our own individual land interests and carrying on our local business of Exchange [p. 97] and Banking. - This local business will be small for awhile and it is well that it is so as our Capital - ready capital - is small. - However I anticipate that by judicious management We will do very well, - and much of the good result will be due to the continued kindness of our "backers" C. B. & Co. and the good members individually of that firm. -

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## Primary Source Image 4: James F. Starr letter, July 19, 1870

Pa has not yet got the deed for the place - he has forwarded it to be signed by Mr. Wagner in South Carolina. - Pa will try to get possession this fall - though the place is rented till Decr 31<sup>st</sup> next -

We are all very happy with our prospects for homes, and [p. 107] Expect before many months to be comfortably and happily settled down. - We can soon make Block 51 by far the most attractive locality in Marshall.

And for our pleasant anticipations Clara and I have to thank our kind Father and Mother in New Orleans, - and will ever endeavor to show how we appreciate it by our respect and affection. -

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## Primary Source Image 5: James F. Starr letter, June 26, 1872

I wrote you that Thomas A. Scott had signed contracts with Marshall - I find that nothing was signed but that he pronounced everything well understood and a finality, - &c. - I should think that he would be satisfied with \$300 M and grounds 1600 yards by 200 yards for Shops & buildings, - We are the technical terminus, - and get the "offices," - but I do not believe that it is perfectly understood what constitutes "the Shops" and "the Offices." - I have some hope that Scott may consolidate with the International R. R. to the extent of having a joint use of the Road from Longview to Marshall, and then build a joint Road from Marshall to Jefferson & Texarcana. - thence I suppose the International Expects to make its connections with line to Cairo, & Scott with line to Memphis. -

Engineers told me this morning that Scott was looking with a favorable [p. 426] Eye toward a direct connection with Sabine Pass. - from Marshall. - Then if we could get a direct Road to N.O. our town might Expect to be able to have Street lamps, - Ice Machines, etc. - Well, Marshall may not realize much, but I do earnestly hope that the Road will be lengthened westward - Scott, J. W. Forney et al - passed on to Dallas, Fort Worth, and to Austin, Houston & Galveston, - I believe. -

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## Handwritten History Main Idea Graphic Organizer

Read each letter written by James F. Starr from 1869-1872. In the graphic organizer, write the main idea Starr was conveying in each letter.

Letter	Main Idea
1: January 21, 1869	
2: March 17, 1870	
3: May 15, 1870	
4: July 19, 1870	
5: June 26, 1872	

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## Activity Resource: Starr Family KWL Organizer

KNOW	WANT TO KNOW	LEARNED

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## Site Visit Recommendations

- Complete the pre-visit lesson or other introductory lessons prior to your field trip.
- Divide students into small groups, each with an adult chaperone.
- Make sure students bring pencils. Pens and markers are not allowed in the exhibits.

## Information

To schedule a site visit field trip for your students, please call 903-935-3044.

For admission prices and hours of operation, please visit us online at <http://visitstarrfamilyhome.com>.

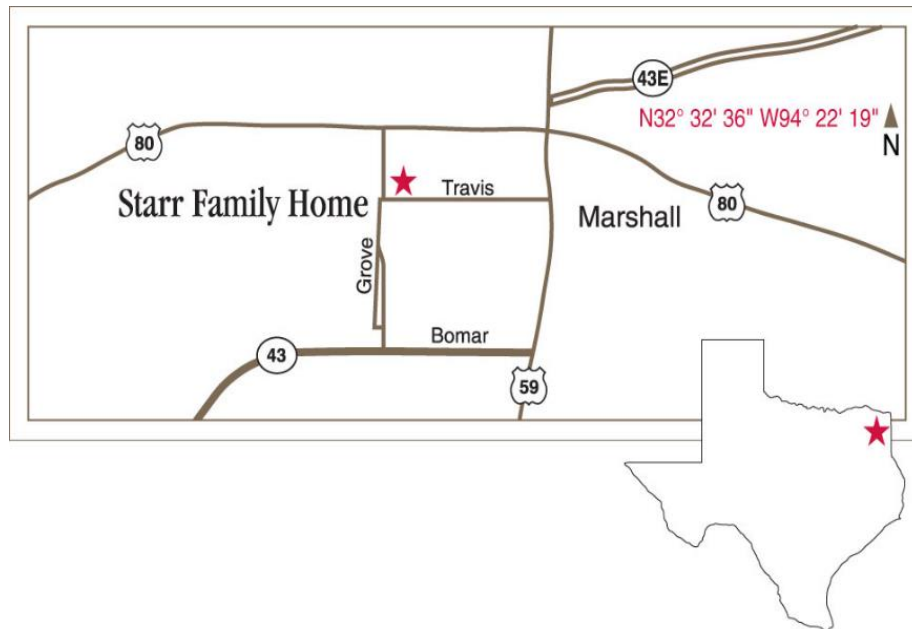
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